



***ALLAN  
PINKERTON***

***THE SOMNAMBULIST  
AND THE DETECTIVE;  
THE MURDERER AND  
THE FORTUNE TELLER***

**Allan Pinkerton**

# **The Somnambulist and the Detective; The Murderer and the Fortune Teller**

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# Table of Contents

ILLUSTRATIONS

THE DETECTIVE

AND THE

SOMNAMBULIST.

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

THE END.

THE MURDERER

AND THE

FORTUNE TELLER.

THE MURDERER

AND THE

FORTUNE TELLER.

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.



# ILLUSTRATIONS

## Table of Contents

Cover.

"At this instant I flung open one of the shutters, and simultaneously I heard a cry of horror from my clerk."—Page 19.

"She soon discovered Mrs. Potter lying by the road-side, groaning and in great pain."—Page 64.

"As soon as the clerk had left the office, Miller quietly extracted Pattmore's letter from the box."—Page 157.

"'Death!' shrieked Mrs. Thayer, and then she fell back lifeless."—Page 199.

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# **THE DETECTIVE**

[Table of Contents](#)

## **AND THE**

[Table of Contents](#)

# **SOMNAMBULIST.**

[Table of Contents](#)

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# ***CHAPTER I.***

## [Table of Contents](#)

About nineteen years ago, I was enjoying a short relaxation from the usual press of business in Chicago. I had only one or two really important cases on hand, and I was therefore preparing to take a much needed rest. At this time, my business was not nearly so extensive as it has since become, nor was my Agency so well known as it now is; hence, I was somewhat surprised and gratified to receive a letter from Atkinson, Mississippi, asking me to go to that town at once, to investigate a great crime recently perpetrated there. I had intended to visit my former home in Dundee, for a week or ten days, but, on receiving this letter, I postponed my vacation indefinitely.

The letter was written by Mr. Thomas McGregor, cashier of the City Bank, of Atkinson, and my services were called for by all the officers of the bank. The circumstances of the case were, in brief, that the paying-teller had been brutally murdered in the bank about three or four months before, and over one hundred and thirty thousand dollars had been stolen. Mr. McGregor said that no expense should be spared to detect the criminals, even though the money was not recovered; that would be an important consideration, of course, but the first object sought was the capture of the murderers of poor George Gordon, the late paying-teller.

Having already arranged my business for a brief absence, I was all ready for the journey, and by the next train, I was speeding southward, toward Atkinson.

I arrived there early in the morning, of one of the most delightful days of early spring. I had exchanged the brown

fields and bare trees of the raw and frosty North, for the balmy airs, blooming flowers, and waving foliage of the sunny South. The contrast was most agreeable to me in my then tired and overworked condition, and I felt that a few days in that climate would restore my strength more effectually than a stay of several weeks in the changeable and inclement weather of northern Illinois. For sanitary, as well as business reasons, therefore, I had no occasion to regret my Southern trip.

My assumed character was that of a cotton speculator, and I was thus able to make many inquiries relative to the town and its inhabitants, without exciting suspicion. Of course, I should have considerable business at the bank, and thus, I could have frequent conferences with the bank officials, without betraying my real object in visiting them. I sent a note to Mr. McGregor, on my arrival, simply announcing myself under a fictitious name, and I soon received a reply requesting me to come to the bank at eight o'clock that evening. I then spent the day in walking about the town and gathering a general idea of the surroundings of the place.

Atkinson was then a town of medium size, pleasantly situated near the northern boundary of the State. The surrounding country was well watered and wooded, consisting of alternate arable land and rolling hills. The inhabitants of the town were divided into two general classes: the shop-keepers, mechanics, and laborers, formed the bulk of the population; while the capitalists, planters and professional men were the most influential. Most of these latter owned country residences, or plantations outside of the town, though they kept up their town establishments also. A small water-course, called Rocky Creek, skirted one side of the place, and many of the most handsome houses, were situated on, or near this beautiful rivulet. The whole

appearance of Atkinson, and the surrounding country, indicated a thrifty, well-to-do population.

Having roamed about to my satisfaction, I spent the latter part of the afternoon at the hotel, where I met a number of the professional men of the county. I found that the hotel was occupied by many of the best families during the winter and spring, and I soon formed the acquaintance of several of the gentlemen. They greeted me with characteristic Southern hospitality, and I was pleased to see that my *role* as a Scotch speculator was quite an easy one to play; at least, no one ever appeared to suspect my real object in visiting Atkinson.

At the appointed hour I went to the bank, and was met outside by Mr. McGregor, to whom I had been introduced during the day. He took me in through the private entrance, and we were joined in a few minutes by Alexander Bannatine, president, and Peter A. Gordon, vice-president, of the bank. Mr. Bannatine was about fifty years of age, but he looked much older, owing to his continuous and exhausting labors as a lawyer, during the early part of his life. Having made a large fortune by successful practice and judicious investments, he had retired from the active pursuit of his profession, and had joined several old friends in the banking business. Mr. Gordon was, also, about fifty years old. He had become wealthy by inheritance, and had increased his fortune by twenty years of careful attention to business. He was unmarried, and George Gordon, the murdered bank-teller, had stood in the relation of a son to his uncle; hence, there was an additional reason for the capture and conviction of the murderers. The recovery of the large sum of money stolen, would, alone, have been an important consideration, but Mr. Gordon was willing to spend a very extravagant amount in the detection of the criminals, even though the money might never be discovered.

We seated ourselves at a table in the cashier's room, and I prepared to take notes of all the facts then known by the gentlemen present.

"Now, Mr. Bannatine," I said, "please tell me everything connected with the case, which may be of service to me."

"Well, Mr. Pinkerton, I have not been connected with the bank so long, or so closely as Mr. McGregor," said Mr. Bannatine, "and perhaps he had better give a short sketch of young Gordon's connection with the bank first."

"George Gordon was taken into our employ about five years ago," said Mr. McGregor. "He had previously acted as our agent in one of the interior towns, and when he became of age he was offered the place of paying-teller. Since then his obliging disposition, courteous manners, and faithful performance of duty, have endeared him to all his associates, and have given him the confidence of all persons with whom he came in contact. His character was spotless, and his devotion to duty was superior to all allurements; he would never sacrifice one moment to pleasure which should have been given to business."

"Had he any associates among the fast men and women of the place?" I asked.

"No, sir, not one," was the prompt reply; "we have not been able to learn that he had any acquaintances even, among that class."

"Well, please proceed to state all the circumstances connected with the murder," I suggested.

"I was not at home at the time," said Mr. McGregor, "but I can give you many facts, and Mr. Gordon can add thereto. George was in the habit of remaining in the bank after office hours for the purpose of writing up his books, as he acted as

book-keeper also. During the very busy seasons, he would sometimes be kept at work until long after dark, though this was unusual. Occasionally customers would come to the bank after the regular hours, and George would accommodate them, or I would do so, when I was present. We were both very careful about admitting outsiders after the bank had closed, and we never allowed any one to enter except well-known business men and old customers of the bank. We had large sums on hand at times, and George frequently said that we could not exercise too much care in managing our business. I mention this to show that he was not careless in his habits, but that, on the contrary, he always took the greatest precautions against fraud or violence."

"Were there any customers who were in the habit of coming in late?" I asked.

"Yes, there were several," replied Mr. McGregor; "for instance, Mr. Flanders, the jeweler, used to bring over his more valuable jewelry every afternoon to put into our vault; he would put it into a small box and leave it here about five o'clock. Then, our county clerk, Mr. Drysdale, used to stop frequently to make deposits in cases where other parties had paid money to him after banking hours. He was very intimate with George, and he used to stop to see him sometimes and walk out with him after his work was finished. Walter Patterson, also, was one of George's particular friends, and he has often stayed with George until nine or ten o'clock in the evening. Besides these there were several of our leading planters who would come in as late as eight o'clock to deposit funds, or to obtain cash for use early the next day."

"Did young Gordon have the keys to the vault?" I asked.

"Oh! yes," replied Mr. McGregor; "I was often called away on business for several days, and he used to act as cashier in my absence. He was in the habit of carrying the keys with him at all times; but his uncle advised him not to do so, as they might be taken from him by a gang of desperate characters, and the bank robbed. He had, therefore, given up the practice of taking the keys home with him after night-fall. Just about the time of the murder, we had one of the busiest seasons ever known; the cotton crop had been enormous, and sales had been very rapid, so that our deposits were unusually large. One morning I found that I must go to Greenville for several days, on business of great importance. Before going, I gave George full instructions upon all matters which might need attention during my absence; yet I felt, while on my way to the depot, that there was something which I had forgotten. I could not define what it was, but I hurried back to ask whether he could think of any thing further upon which he might wish my advice. I found him chatting with his friend, Mr. Drysdale. Calling him to one side, I said:

"George, is there anything more upon which I can advise you?"

"No, I guess not," he replied; "you will be back so soon that if there should anything new turn up, it can wait until you return."

"Well, be very careful," I continued, "and don't allow any one to come in here after dark. It may be an unnecessary precaution, but I should feel easier if I knew no one was admitted to the bank during my absence."

"Very well," he replied, "I shall allow only one or two of my personal friends to come in. There will be no harm in admitting them, for they will be an additional protection in case of any attempt on the bank."

"I could offer no objection, and so we parted. I was gone about a week, when, having settled my business in Greenville, I returned here. The first news I received was, that George Gordon had been found murdered in the bank that morning, the crime having been committed the night before. I will now let Mr. Peter Gordon, George's uncle, tell the circumstances, so far as he knows them."

Mr. McGregor was a careful, methodical man, about sixty years of age. He always spoke directly to the point, and in his story, he had evidently made no attempt to draw conclusions, or to bias my judgment in any way. Nevertheless, he showed that he was really affected by young Gordon's murder, and I saw that I should get more really valuable assistance from him, than from both of the other two. Mr. Gordon was greatly excited, and he could hardly speak at times, as he thought of his murdered nephew. His story was told slowly and painfully, as if the details were almost too much for him. Still, he felt that nothing ought to be neglected which would assist me, and so he nerved himself to tell every little incident of the dreadful crime.

"I remember the day of the murder very distinctly, Mr. Pinkerton," he said. "Mr. Bannatine was obliged to visit his plantation that morning, and Mr. McGregor being away, as he has already told you, I spent most of the day at the bank with George. He was perfectly competent to manage all the business himself, Mr. Pinkerton, for he was a very smart and trustworthy young man, the very image of my dear brother, who was drowned twenty years ago, leaving me to bring up George like my own son; but, as I was saying, I kept George company in the bank that day, more as a measure of safety, than because he needed me. Well we received a large amount of money that day in bank notes and specie, and I helped George put the money into

the vault. When the bank closed, George said that he should work until five o'clock and then go home to dinner. I was anxious to go to my store, as business had been very heavy that day, and I had had no opportunity to attend to my own affairs; I therefore left the bank at four o'clock. George and I boarded at the hotel, and at dinner time, he came late, so that I finished before he did. About seven o'clock, George came down to the store, where I had gone after dinner. He sat a little while and smoked a cigar with me, and then said that he must return to the bank, as he had a great deal of work to finish up on the books; he told me, also, not to sit up for him, as it might be quite late before he came home."

"Were there any other persons present when he said this, Mr. Gordon?" I asked.

"Yes; there was a shoemaker, named Stolz, whom George had just paid for a pair of boots. Mr. Flanders, the jeweler, was there also, and he had his box of jewelry for George to lock up in the safe. There had been so many customers in his store that afternoon that he had not been able to take the box over before. There were several other persons present, I recollect now that you ask me about it, but I had not thought of the matter before, and I cannot recall their names."

"Well, I guess we can find out," I replied; "please go on. By the way, one question: had George drunk anything at all during the day?"

"No, sir, nothing whatever. George used to smoke a great deal, but he *never* drank at a bar in his life; all his young friends will tell you the same. He sometimes drank wine at meals at his own or a friend's table, but he never drank at any other place. He left my store about half-past seven o'clock, and Flanders went with him to leave his jewelry. Flanders' store is near mine, and he soon came back and

chatted with me a short time. He has since told me that he did not enter the bank, but that he simply handed the case of jewelry to George on the steps of the private entrance, and George said to him: 'I won't ask you to come in, Flanders, for I have too much work to attend to, and I can't entertain you.' These are the last words that George is known to have spoken."

Here Mr. Gordon's agitation was so great that he could not speak for several minutes, but at length, he continued:

"I went to bed about ten o'clock that evening, and came down late to breakfast next morning. I did not see George anywhere around the hotel, but I thought nothing of that, as I supposed that he had gone to the bank. After breakfast, I got shaved, smoked a cigar, and then went to my store. In a few minutes, a man named Rollo, who has an account at the bank, came in and said:

"Mr. Gordon, what is the matter at the bank this morning? It is now after ten o'clock, and everything is still shut up.'

"What!' I exclaimed, 'the bank not opened yet! My nephew must be sick, though he was quite well yesterday evening. I will go to the bank with you at once, Mr. Rollo.'

"One of my clerks accompanied us, and on arriving at the bank, we found a cabinet-maker named Breed, trying to get in. I went and pounded on the front door several times, but no one came. I then went to the private entrance and gave the signal by rapping, to let those inside know that one of the bank officers was at the door. We had a private signal known only to the officers, so that I was sure there must be something wrong when I found it unanswered. I had a dreadful feeling in my heart that something horrible had happened, and I was about to hurry away to the hotel, to see if George was there, when I casually let my hand fall

upon the knob and turned it; to my surprise, the door yielded.

"By this time, quite a crowd had gathered outside, attracted by the unusual spectacle of the closed bank, and the knocking at the doors. I therefore left Mr. Rollo and Mr. Breed to keep the crowd from entering the side entrance, while my clerk and I threw open the heavy shutters of this room where we are now sitting. We then entered the main bank through yonder door, and while I went to open the outside blinds, which excluded every particle of light, my clerk walked down behind the bank counter. He suddenly stumbled over something and fell, and as he got up, he said that the floor was wet. At this instant, I flung open one of the shutters, and simultaneously I heard a cry of horror from my clerk. Running to the counter, I looked over and saw a terrible sight. My poor boy—"

Again Mr. Gordon's feelings overcame him, and it was some time before he could go on. Finally he was able to resume his story, though he was frequently obliged to pause to wipe away his tears.

"My nephew's body was lying midway between his desk and the vault door; he had evidently been standing at his desk when he was struck, as was shown by the direction in which the blood had spirted. He had been murdered by three blows on the back of the head, the instrument used being a heavy canceling hammer, which we found close by, clotted with blood and hair. The first blow had been dealt just back of the left ear while George was standing at his desk; he had then staggered backward two or three steps before falling, and the second and third blows had been struck as he lay on the floor. Although it was evident that the first blow alone was sufficient to cause death, the murderer had been anxious to complete his work beyond any possibility of failure.

"The scene was most ghastly; George's body lay in a pool of blood, while the desks, chairs, table and wall, were spattered with large drops which had spirted out as the blows were struck. I shall never forget that terrible morning, and sometimes I awake with a horrible choking sensation, and think that I have just renewed the sickening experience of that day.

"Well, I immediately suspected that the murder had been committed to enable the murderer to rob the bank. I knew that George had no enemies who would seek his life, and there could be no other object in killing him inside the bank. The outer door of the vault stood slightly ajar, and as soon as I had satisfied myself that my nephew was dead—as indeed was evident, the body being quite cold—I sent my clerk to call Mr. Rollo and Mr. Breed into the bank, while he remained at the door. I told him to send any person whom he might see outside for the sheriff and the coroner. As I was saying, the vault door stood slightly open, and when the other gentleman joined me I called their attention to the position of everything before I entered the vault. I found the keys in the lock of the inner door, and on opening the latter we saw that everything inside was in great confusion. Without making any examination, I closed and locked both doors, and sealed the key-holes with tape and sealing-wax. I determined to leave everything just as it was until the inquest should be held. The sheriff and coroner soon arrived, and a jury was impaneled immediately, as, by that time, the news had spread all over town, and the bank was surrounded by nearly all the best men in the place. In summoning the jury, the coroner put down for foreman the name of Mr. Drysdale, George's most intimate friend, but it was found that he was not in the crowd outside, and when they sent for him he begged so hard to be excused that he was let off.

"The inquest was held in this room, but nothing was moved from the bank except the body and the canceling hammer. The jury elicited nothing more than what I have told you, and they therefore adjourned to await the examination of our vault when Mr. McGregor and Mr. Bannatine returned, in the hope that some clue might be found therein. I forgot to mention that we found in George's hand a bill of the Planter's Bank of Georgia, of the denomination of one hundred dollars. It was clutched tightly, and he had fallen on that side, so that the murderer had not noticed it. Here it is, partly stained with blood," and Mr. Gordon handed me a bank note. He then continued:

"A messenger had been dispatched to inform Mr. Bannatine of the disaster, and he arrived in town almost simultaneously with Mr. McGregor, who was already on his way home when the murder occurred. As Mr. Bannatine is well acquainted with all the subsequent events, I prefer that he should give the account of our action since that time."

It was clearly very painful to Mr. Gordon to talk upon the subject of his nephew's murder, and Mr. Bannatine willingly took up the thread of the story. He had practiced at the bar so long that his style resembled that of a witness under examination, and he was always careful to give his authority whenever he stated facts outside of his own observation. His testimony was of the greatest importance to me, and I took very full notes as he went along.

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## **CHAPTER II.**

### [Table of Contents](#)

I received the intelligence of George Gordon's murder about noon, by a messenger from Mr. Gordon. I immediately rode into town and went to the bank, where I arrived about two o'clock. The inquest was not completed, but at the sheriff's suggestion the jury adjourned until the next morning. The cause of death, according to the testimony of Dr. Hartman and Dr. Larimore, was concussion of the brain, produced by three separate blows on the back of the head; the blows might have been dealt with the canceling hammer, which, Mr. Gordon said, had been found close by the body. The latter was removed to the hotel preparatory to the funeral.

"Mr. Gordon, Mr. McGregor, and myself then proceeded to open the bank, taking the sheriff to assist us in searching for clues to aid in the detection of the criminals. We first opened all the shutters to give as much light as possible. We then examined the interior of the bank; outside of the counter nothing whatever was found, but inside we discovered several important traces of the murderer. The fireplace showed that something had recently been burned in it. The grate had been perfectly clean all summer, and Mr. Gordon tells me such was the case when he left the bank at four o'clock. The character of the ashes—as I am assured by expert chemists—denoted that clothing had been burned, and while examining them I found several buttons; here they are," he added, producing four or five iron buttons, and the charred remains of two or three horn buttons.

"While feeling around in the light ashes beneath the grate," continued Mr. Bannatine, "I found a piece of paper twisted up and charred at one end; its appearance indicated that it had been used to light the fire in the grate. On unrolling it carefully, it proved to be a fragment of a note for \$927.78; the signature, part of the date, and the amount of the note were left uncharred, but most of the upper portion was wholly burned. The signature was that of Alexander P. Drysdale, our esteemed county clerk."

Mr. Bannatine here showed me this fragment pressed out between two oblong pieces of heavy plate glass. I glanced at it a few minutes, and then placed it beside the buttons for future examination.

"Among the few scraps of paper found," resumed Mr. Bannatine, "was another one, which we found under George's body, saturated with blood. The murderer had evidently destroyed every piece of paper that he could find; but this one had probably been lying on the floor, and when George fell, it was hidden by his body. This, and the note, were the only papers found on the desks or about the floor of the bank which had any writing upon them; even the waste paper baskets and their contents had been burned. Here is the paper, Mr. Pinkerton; we have preserved it carefully, because we thought that it might suggest something to a detective, though it had no special significance to us."

He handed me the paper, as he spoke. It was a fragment of letter paper, about three by six inches in size. It was stained a brownish red by poor young Gordon's lifeblood; but beneath the stain, were plainly visible the pen marks of the murdered man. It had a number of figures on one side, arranged like examples in addition, though they were scattered carelessly, as if he had been checking off balances, and had used this fragment to verify his additions.

The reverse side was blank. I laid this paper beside the note, and Mr. Bannatine continued his story:

"We then opened the safe, and counted the money; this was easily done, for we found that all the loose money was gone, leaving only a small quantity of coin and a number of packages of bills. These latter were put up in lots of five thousand dollars each, and were wrapped in a bright red tissue paper. George had put up over one hundred thousand dollars in this way, about a week before, and the murderer had not touched these packages at all; we were thus spared a loss, which would have somewhat crippled us. As it was, the loss in bills amounted to about one hundred and five thousand dollars, while exactly twenty-eight thousand dollars in gold eagles and double eagles, were also missing. A few days after the murder, one of Col. Garnett's slaves found two twenty-dollar gold pieces at an old fording place on Rocky Creek, just outside the city, and we came to the conclusion that the robber had dropped them there; but of course, we could not identify gold pieces, and so we could not be sure. The coroner closed the inquest the following day, and the jury found a verdict of death at the hands of a person or persons unknown. The funeral was attended by people from miles around, and there was a general determination shown to spare no pains to bring the murderers to justice; large rewards were offered by the Governor, by the bank, and by the county officials, and some of the best detectives in the country were employed, but all to no purpose. When the gold pieces were found, a number of George's intimate friends organized a party to search the adjoining woods for traces of the criminals, as it was thought they might have camped out in that vicinity, before or after the deed. All of George's intimate friends joined in the search, except Mr. Drysdale, who was so much overcome at the terrible occurrence, that he was quite prostrated. Nothing was found by this party, however;